



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Southern District of New York

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U.S. ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK **CHARGES ROCKLAND COUNTY PSYCHIATRIST, PHARMACIST AND** **13 OTHERS WITH NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING OFFENSES**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JANICE K. FEDARCYK, the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and THOMAS P. ZUGIBE, the District Attorney for Rockland County, announced charges today against 15 individuals for engaging in narcotics trafficking in and around Rockland County, New York. Ten defendants, including SRINATH THOOMPALLY, a pharmacist, are charged in an Indictment with unlawfully distributing large quantities of prescription pain medications, including oxycodone, hydromorphone, hydrocodone, oxymorphone, and fentanyl. ARISIDE ESSER, a medical doctor and board-certified psychiatrist, is charged in a separate Complaint with unlawfully distributing secobarbital, a barbiturate. A second Complaint charges four individuals with conspiring to distribute several different narcotics. All 15 defendants were arrested this morning and are expected to be presented in White Plains federal court later this afternoon.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "When not taken properly, prescription pills can have lethal effects. It is especially troubling if, as alleged, medical professionals were using their professional licenses to facilitate the abuse of these medications for their own personal gain. I applaud the FBI and the Rockland County District Attorney's Office and Narcotics Task Force for shutting down these dangerous distribution rings. As today's arrests make clear, we are committed to stopping the distribution of illegal drugs in whatever form they take."

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge JANICE K. FEDARCYK stated: "The illegal distribution of legitimate prescription pain medication was potentially as dangerous as the distribution of illegal drugs like crack and heroin. The FBI will continue to aggressively investigate these cases and work together with our partners in disrupting and dismantling such activity."

Rockland County District Attorney THOMAS P. ZUGIBE stated: "Rockland County has seen a startling rise in the use and abuse of highly addictive prescription medications. It is our hope that through this effort and other similar operations, we can reduce the illicit use of potent drugs like oxycodone and save lives. Today's arrests underscore our commitment to improve the quality of life for the residents of our community. I commend the men and women of my Office, the United States Attorney for the Southern District and the FBI for the cooperation in this case."

The Rockland County Pill Network

According to the Indictment U.S. v. Srinath Thoompally, et al. unsealed today in White Plains federal court:

From 2007 to the present, a network of individuals based in Rockland County distributed large quantities of controlled substances (the "Rockland Pill Network"), including prescription pain medications such as oxycodone, hydromorphone, hydrocodone, oxymorphone, and fentanyl, in and around Rockland County, New York, and elsewhere in the New York metropolitan area. Members of the Rockland Pill Network include: THOOMPALLY, DAVID JACOBS, THOMAS ZIEGLER, FELICE BASSI, JESSE BAILEY, FIRAS YOUSEF, ALEX FUSCO, JOHN BRUN, VINCENT KRASINSKI, and MELANIE DECORT.

The network used a variety of methods to obtain controlled substances, including stealing prescription pads to write forged prescriptions for controlled substances. The forged prescriptions were filled at various pharmacies, including one located in New City, New York, ("Pharmacy-1"), which was operated by THOOMPALLY. Members of the organization obtained tens of thousands of prescription pills in this manner.

To avoid detection by regulators, THOOMPALLY directed a co-conspirator ("CC-1") who was submitting prescriptions for controlled substances, to also submit prescriptions for non-controlled substances. In so doing, THOOMPALLY increased his profits and created patient prescription histories that were not limited to controlled substances.

The Medical Doctor and Board-Certified Psychiatrist

According to the Complaint U.S. v. Aristide Esser unsealed today in White Plains federal court:

ESSER is a medical doctor and board-certified psychiatrist who practices in Rockland County. On two separate occasions, ESSER provided a cooperating witness with prescriptions for secobarbital in names other than that of the individual. Secobarbital is a Schedule II controlled substance that is commonly sold in a form known as "Seconal." During one appointment, ESSER told the cooperating witness that he would "gladly medicate" the cooperating witness's friends if they made appointments with him.

The Narcotics & Marijuana Distribution Ring

According to the Complaint U.S. v. Sereyrih Proum et al. unsealed today in White Plains federal court:

SEREYRITH PROUM, DANIEL RIVERA, MICHAEL GUZMAN, and MICHAEL FARAGO allegedly conspired to distribute a host of narcotics, including oxycodone, methamphetamine, MDMA (commonly known as Ecstasy), marijuana, and more than 500 grams of cocaine. As part of the investigation, each defendant was intercepted on court-authorized telephone wiretaps discussing the distribution of controlled substances.

* * *

Each defendant named in U.S. v. Srinath Thoompally, et al., is charged with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute Schedule II controlled substances, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. THOOMPALLY, BAILEY, and JACOBS are also charged with distribution and possession with intent to distribute Schedule II controlled substances, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. BRUN is also charged with distribution and possession with intent to distribute 28 grams and more of crack cocaine, which carries a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison.

ESSER is charged with two counts of distribution and possession with intent to distribute Schedule II controlled substances, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

Each defendant named in U.S. v. Sereyrit Proum et al. is charged with conspiracy to distribute narcotics, which carries a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison.

Mr. BHARARA praised the outstanding investigative work of the FBI, the Rockland County District Attorney's Office, and the Rockland County Narcotics Task Force. He also thanked the New York OCDETF Crime Strike Force, the Rockland County Sheriff's Department, the Rockland County Intelligence Center, the New York City Police Department, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Marshal Service, the New York State Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Police, and the Clarkstown, Ramapo, Orangetown, Suffern, Spring Valley, Haverstraw, and Stony Point Police Departments. Mr. BHARARA added that the investigation, which has involved the use of a cooperating witness and wiretap interceptions spanning an eight-month period, is continuing.

These prosecutions are being handled by the Office's White Plains Division. Assistant U.S. Attorney LEE RENZIN is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment and the Complaints are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.